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**An evaluation of a dropout prevention program for middle
school students in an urban setting**

Hampton, Frederick Maceo, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1991

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AN EVALUATION OF A DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AN URBAN SETTING

By
Frederick Maceo Hampton

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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of the Requirements for the Degree
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Approved by


Dissertation Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

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The Greensboro "Cities in Schools" project, one of several federally funded interventions programs across the nation targeted toward elementary and secondary students who are "at risk" of dropping out of school, was critically evaluated. Similar to programs in other cities and states, the Greensboro Cities in Schools program was intended to be comprehensive in the sense that it attempted to address all of the factors (academic, social, family, and vocational) in a student's life that presumably affect school attendance. The ultimate success of such programs must be judged by whether participating students actually remain in school and graduate in greater proportions than they otherwise would have. The current investigation examined the effects of the intervention upon factors known to be related to dropping out of school. In particular, nonparametric comparisons were made of 30 middle grade students in two low socioeconomic Greensboro middle schools and 30 control students on (1) grade point average, (2) standardized test scores, (3) attendance, and (4) disciplinary action. No differences were found between control and participating students grade point averages, standardized test scores, and frequency of disciplinary problems, but the intervention did appear to arrest the tendency for at risk students to be increasingly absent from school during the middle school years. It was concluded that interventions such as

the Cities in Schools program, consisting as they do of only one period per day of actual contact with the students, must be considerably expanded if they are to be effective. They must start earlier in the life of the student and the actual "contact time" with each student must be considerably expanded and should include out-of-school contact as well.

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The author wishes to dedicate this study to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alphonso Hampton.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 1980's was a period of intense interest in education reform and improvement for at-risk students in the United States. State legislatures, State Boards of Education, Governors, local school personnel and the general public all encouraged changes in education for at-risk students. Neither the state of North Carolina nor Guilford County and Greensboro City was exempt from reform emphasis.

As a part of the education reform effort, Guilford County and Greensboro City Schools implemented the "Cities in Schools, Inc." (CIS) program in an effort to reduce the number of dropouts. This new Guilford County and Greensboro City program, which was started in 1988, was piloted on the campus sites of Lincoln Middle School (City) and Northeast Middle School (County) in grades 6 - 8.

The purpose of the CIS program is to keep students at-risk in school through graduation by developing partnerships which bring the fullest range and deepest commitment of community resources to bear on the conditions which cause students to drop out of school.

The CIS program brings together a broad range of social services where they can be most useful-- in the school because it is there that some of the earliest signs of a youngster's trouble can be observed-- through truancy, through under-achievement, through maladjustment, and through myriad other indicators. By linking

social services and the corporate and business communities with local schools, CIS offers a method or process for a community to focus it's resources to help those at-risk youth who need help most, and do so in a highly organized and coordinated manner.

In the Guilford County and Greensboro City School systems, results of the North Carolina dropout statistics (1986-1987) indicated that rates here were unacceptably high. The rates were 22% for the Guilford County School System and 30% for the Greensboro Public School System. The state rate was 30% (an estimate based on the total number of students who dropped out of one class over a four year period, grades 9 - 12.)

Walton (1965) concluded that high school graduation was considered essential for the individual citizen to take an intelligent and responsible part in the complex affairs of a democratic society. Wehlage, Rutter and Turnbaugh (1987) found that dropouts' prospects for success in the labor market were bleak at best. They stated that dropouts were almost certain to become social liabilities and to face lifelong problems of unemployment and welfare dependency. According to Kozol (1985), persons with inadequate education lack the skills for economic and educational advancement. They lack the skills necessary to accomplish the tasks of everyday living; in fact, they may have few life choices. Nationally, 75% of unemployed persons, 85% of prison inmates, and 90% of the women who receive Aid For Dependent Children (AFDC) payments have inadequate education skills- that is the ability to read, write, and do math above the eighth grade-level. In North

Carolina, the statistics are comparable. Inadequate education interrelates with virtually all problem areas. Persons unequipped with basic skills are at a constant disadvantage in the job market and consequently in other facets of life.

For the 1986 - 1987 school year, the last school year that statistics are available before the start of the CIS program, 501 students dropped out of the Greensboro City School System and 425 students dropped out of the Guilford County School System. Not all 926 dropouts will fail, of course. It is reasonable to expect that one-half will be at least marginally productive. If one assumes that one-fourth of the 926 dropouts - that is 231 - will be nonproductive and not otherwise troublesome, then that leaves society to bear the cost of those dropouts and their children. If these costs average \$5000 per year for each dropout in this group, that comes to about \$1,155,000 per year. If it is assumed that the bottom one-fourth of the dropouts, another 231, will not only be nonproductive and require the \$5000 a year of support, but also will actively cause problems that cost society another \$5000 a year per dropout, then the total cost to the community for this group could be \$2,310,000 a year. That comes to \$3,465,000 per year for the 926 dropouts. Since dropouts tend to stay in the community, the extended cost over a 20 year period for these 926 dropouts to the community is many millions of dollars.

Former Harvard University President, James Conant (1961) studied affluent suburban schools and city schools in which most of the students were poor and minority. Conant concluded:

I am convinced we are allowing social dynamite to accumulate in our large cities. I am not nearly as concerned about the plight of suburban parents whose offspring are having difficulty finding places in prestige colleges as I am about the plight of parents in the slums whose children either dropout or graduate from school without prospects of either further education or employment. In some slum neighborhoods I have no doubt that over half of the boys between sixteen and twenty-one are out of school and out of work. Leaving aside human tragedies, I submit that a continuation of this situation is a menace to social and political health of the large cities.

Project History

National Organization

Cities in Schools, Inc., a national organization formed in 1976 in New York, is a public/private partnership supported by a variety of businesses, foundations, and individuals, as well as an interagency grant from the U.S. Justice, Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Departments. CIS has over 100 local dropout prevention programs in more than 20 cities throughout the United States, serving 10,000 at-risk youths and their families.

Background

The initiation of the Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools program in 1988 was a reflection of growing concerns of administrators, teachers and parents over the student dropout rate. During this particular time frame, political, media, social, and education pressures all focused on the need to improve the rate of graduation.

Local Organization

Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools, Inc. is funded for the first three years by the Greensboro Development Corporation and by a Venture Grant from the United Way of Greater Greensboro. Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools, Inc. operated for the first two years at two school sites; Lincoln Middle School and Northeast Middle

School serving approximately 80 students and their families during the first two years.

Geographic Area Served

The geographic area covered for services delivered in the schools includes school attendance zones for Lincoln Middle School and Northeast Middle School. The area covered for education and coordination efforts in the community is Guilford County with the exception of the High Point area which is served by High Point Cities in Schools, Inc.

Description

Initially, 30 students and their families were invited to participate at each program site. The students were selected by the participating school systems. Students meeting the greatest number of the following at-risk indicators were invited to participate in the program first.

1. One or more retentions
2. Poor attendance
3. Poor grades
4. Low California Achievement Test scores
5. Behavior problems in school / community
6. In-school and out-of-school suspensions
7. Prior placement in an alternative school
8. Pregnancy or currently a teenage parent

9. Family illegible for social services
10. Student receives free or reduced lunch
11. Parents did not graduate from high school
12. Student is currently under court ordered probation
13. Proof or strong evidence of drug use

A teacher / project coordinator was furnished for each school site by the respective school system. There are three CIS classes daily at each school site, one sixth, one seventh, and one eighth grade class. CIS students are assigned to the CIS class in place of one of their electives. A life skills curriculum is taught during the CIS class period. The CIS class period is also a time when the human service agencies' and organizations' personnel work with students either individually or in a group providing educational as well as clinical services.

Participating agencies include the Guilford County Department of Public Health; the Department of Social Services; the Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services Program; Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department; Youth Services Bureau; the Developmental Evaluation Center; the Sycamore Center; Alcohol Information Center; Family and Children's Services; and Juvenile Court Services. The CIS class is also a time when tutors / mentors from the business community work with the students on a one to one basis to help with academic remediation and to develop personal relationships with the students.

Objectives of the Cities in Schools program

Goal I. To facilitate improved support, performance, and skills of at-risk students in areas critical to their staying in school with the aim of increasing the number of those students who stay in school and receive a high school diploma or the equivalent.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Performance standards</u>
1. To develop and maintain supportive relationships between CIS staff and CIS students.	Provide daily contact with each student by scheduling them into a CIS class which meets one period per day for the entire year.
2. To increase attendance of CIS students.	Keep daily attendance and collect and compare past and present records.
3. To reduce the number of days that CIS students spend in In-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS).	Keep, collect and compare ISS and OSS records, past and present.
4. To improve CIS parent-school relationships.	Have parents participate in at least one home visit conducted by CIS staff per

year.

Have parents participate in at least two parent conferences per year at which time one of the items to be assessed is parental satisfaction with the CIS program.

Have parents contacted by CIS staff by phone or letter at least 5 times per year.

Provide at least one parent meeting or activity per school year.

5. To improve self-esteem and social development of CIS students.

Provide all CIS students with activities (either through the curriculum, field trips or community service) for personal

growth, recreation,
cultural and artistic
enrichment.

Administer a professionally
accepted self-esteem
measurement instrument at
the at the beginning and
end of the school year to
the CIS students and to a
control group of students.

6. To improve study skills and
academic performance.

Assign each student a
tutor from outside the
school who will work with
the student on a one to
one basis for one class
period once a week. Keep,
collect and compare grades
each grading period.

7. To assist classroom teachers	Have each CIS teacher keep
by providing a link between CIS	records of all contacts
students and their other teachers;	with other classroom
by providing information about CIS	teachers, tutors and
students; by monitoring the	community resources.
completion of homework and class	
assignments; by serving as liaison	Provide at least one in-
for the tutors; and providing	service training session
information on community resources	for all teachers in CIS
to the students and to their	schools relating to the
teachers.	problems of at-risk
	students.

Goal II. To develop the school as the focal point for the integrated delivery of human services, coordinating resources of local, state, and federal government agencies, community agencies and the corporate sector; and to provide these services in a manner which utilizes a holistic approach and promotes personalism and accountability.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Performance Standards</u>
1. To bring together a team of individuals representing community agencies to provide services at the school site.	Obtain a minimum of 3 agreements with human service agencies / organizations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - full-time repositioned staff - part-time repositioned staff - team staffings attended by community agency personnel.
2. To establish linkages with corporations (including volunteer recruitment) to develop resources for meeting the needs of CIS students and families.	Secure at least one tutor per CIS student. Record resources (materials, manpower and

time) recruited from
community organizations
and corporations.

3. To develop ongoing
individual service plans (ISPs)
for each CIS student based on
specific strengths and needs
and to involve students and
parents in committing to
stated goals.

Have 3 tutor orientation /
training sessions per
year.

Ongoing plans (behavior
specific) will be
developed for 100% of CIS
students.

4. To develop a case
management system which
promotes a holistic approach
to service delivery.

Each student and family
will be assigned a case
manager who will be
responsible for
implementing the ISP.

Team staffings will be
held, a minimum of 2 per
month, to help in the
development of the ISP and
to coordinate services and

to facilitate referrals to
various community
agencies.

Goal III. To educate the community about school dropouts and their related problems, to increase community resources to address these problems, and to unify community efforts to address these problems.

<u>Objectives</u>	<u>Performance Standards</u>
1. Continue the work of the program committee representing agencies and schools.	Program committee will meet a minimum of two times per year.
2. Provide education to community about at-risk students and related social problems and about the CIS program.	Develop a Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools, Inc. news letter to be sent biannually to schools, agencies, corporations, civic groups and others. Develop a Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools, Inc. fact sheet.

Make 15 presentations per year to organizations, agencies and groups.

Plan and implement with other groups a community educational seminar for students, teachers, community leaders, agency personnel and business leaders to provide information about and seek solutions for the problems of school dropouts.

Purpose of the Study

This study (1) describes a two-year attempt by the Cities in Schools program to increase the number of students that are likely to remain in school until graduation in these selected schools through the use of elements based on the philosophy of CIS, and (2) analyzes the results of the initial two years in the project.

The study examined the impact of the CIS program, on identified characteristics of at-risk students in the Greensboro and Guilford County School Systems. The study will provide school personnel, parents, local, state and federal agencies with useful information regarding their efforts to prevent students from dropping out.

Significance of the Study

In order to assess efforts to reduce the dropout rate, there is a need to evaluate the progress we are making with implemented programs. There is a need to understand if and/or which programs are having a significant and positive impact on the problem. Knowing what works for at-risk students requires knowing what has been done (interventions applied) to whom (students that have dropped and for what reasons) and with what effect.

The additional knowledge gained from this study may allow school leaders to concentrate human and fiscal resources on areas that prove to be the most beneficial to students. Information gained from this study will provide a wider knowledge base for the improvement of overall school programs and will assist in helping to identify the illusive effective schools, effective teachers and effective administrators. The study will contribute to what we know about parenting and the development of good communities.

Specific Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

Has the Greater Greensboro Cities in Schools program had a statistically significant positive impact on at-risk students as demonstrated by:

1. Improvement in student grades?
2. " " attendance of students?
3. " " achievement test score?
4. " " referrals for discipline?

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Because of the non-experimental nature of the study (i.e., non-random assignment to treatment conditions and the fact that students were nested within teachers), the ability to generalize any results from this study is limited. If it is reasonable to suppose that students and teachers in the project are representative of other urban schools in medium size communities, then the results here may be general to such school systems. Generalizations to smaller or larger systems may be inappropriate.

Regarding the internal validity of the study, the major limitation is the inability to ascribe program effects unambiguously to specific program components. This study was not able to sort out the specifics of the treatment as to the relative importance of each of the several components of the treatment. The activities of the whole project were considered; no attempt was made to differentiate the relative success of certain Cities in Schools activities.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I includes the project history, a description of the Cities in Schools program, significance of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, and a statement of study organization.

Chapter II includes a review of literature which focuses on previous research related to the causes of students leaving school before graduation and methods/programs that have demonstrated success in reducing the problem.

Chapter III includes the procedures necessary in implementing the study and a discussion of the statistical and analytic treatments.

Chapter IV presents the results of the study.

Chapter V includes a summary of previous chapters, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for further investigation.

You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will.

Eliza Doolittle to Colonel Pickering
George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion
(1940, p. 80)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter II contains a review of selected published literature concerning students at-risk of dropping out of school. The content of this chapter will focus on five major areas; identifying the at-risk student, teacher expectations and school environment, self concept and school achievement, parental influences and the home environment, and primary characteristics of successful programs. The research in this section puts the CIS Program into perspective.

IDENTIFYING THE STUDENT AT-RISK OF DROPPING OUT

There is no single characteristic or pattern of characteristics that describe all dropouts or identify all students at-risk of dropping out.

Ogden and Germinario (1988) stated that all children were at times students-at-risk and there was a portion of every school population that consistently shows a lack of the necessary intellectual, emotional and/or social skills to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Often these students become disenchanted, and ultimately openly or passively reject school; they are then students-at-risk.

In work related to this area, Sartain (1989) defined students

at-risk of dropping out as children of school age, who, because of one or more factors in a syndrome of disadvantageous traits, behaviors, and circumstances are in danger of being unsuccessful in school and/or in danger of becoming enmeshed in personally debilitating social, emotional, physical, or economic difficulties currently or in the near future.

Slavin and Madden (1989) described a student at-risk as one in danger of failing to complete his or her education with an adequate level of skills.

Lehr and Harris (1988) narrowed their perspective of the at-risk student to "one who is not working up to potential" and limited their view to low achievement. They determined that both the terms of at-risk and low achievement were relative and stated as an illustration that even Albert Einstein was labeled a low achiever.

According to Mink and Kaplin (1970) varying combinations of a number of identifiable factors do appear to be related to dropping out of school. The significant variables are family background, which includes below-average socioeconomic and cultural status; employment of the father as an unskilled or semiskilled worker, and failure of parents to complete high school; little or no social relationships in school, little participation in extracurricular activities, early school failures, failing at least one subject, low marks, grade retention of a year or more, overage for grade, low reading and mathematical ability, language difficulties, inadequate personality structure, high absenteeism in school, improper,

inadequate, or changing school curricula, and low intelligence quotients.

Liddle (1962) demonstrated that dropouts, as a group, have below average intellectual ability, are average or below for their grade, are often absent from school, and are failing one or more courses.

The NEA Research Division (1963) reports conflicting findings as to the importance of the intelligence quotient as a factor contributing to school dropouts. Some researchers find that intelligence is of minor importance while others find that it is significant.

Several studies interestingly indicate the flexibility of IQ scores with environmental change. Among the most significant of these studies was one conducted by Skodak (1949) who placed 100 children, all under the age of six months, into adoptive homes, all of which were in the higher socioeconomic levels. All the foster parents were in managerial occupations. The intellectual development of these children was followed by periodic testing over a 13 year period. The mean IQ score of the children at age 13 was 106 as compared with a mean of 85.7 of 63 of the true mothers, who were mostly from the lower socioeconomic levels. The difference of 20 IQ points was highly significant.

Research from a study conducted by Wehlage and Rutter (1986) discovered that at-risk students who become dropouts share a number of characteristics. Their research showed that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have the highest dropout rate; among

ethnics, Hispanics have the highest dropout rate; followed by blacks, then whites. Other demographic factors which influence the dropout rate include: a single-parent family; a large family; or living in a city or in the urban or rural South. Their study suggested that low socioeconomic status coupled with minority group status were strong predictors of dropping out.

The High School and Beyond Study (1983) showed that dropouts are disproportionately from low SES families and racial/ethnic minority groups. While 15 percent of students who were sophomores in 1980 did not complete school two years later, nearly 25 percent of black students dropped out. Dropouts were also more likely to be older, to be males rather than females, and to attend public schools in the urban areas in the South or West.

Research literature from four national studies utilizing longitudinal data: Project TALENT, Youth in Transition, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Market Experience, and High School and Beyond, confirms that a family background characterized by low socioeconomic status (SES), is strongly associated with dropping out. However, what it is about this kind of family background that produces youth who are poor risks to finish school is not made clear in the analyses of the data. Another finding is that poor school performance leading to low grades and course failure is associated with dropping out. After controlling for family background, race is not a variable that predicts dropout.

As symptoms of a dropout, Tuel (1966) described the following: (1) grade failure, especially in the elementary school; (2) low

verbal intelligence (placement in the lowest decile on mental abilities or reading test; (3) low socioeconomic background, minimal family education, low level of parental occupation, or a broken home; (4) frequency of absence and (5) lack of participation, general maladjustment and insecurity.

The following list contains characteristics that were identified as a result of the research of Lehr and Harris (1988). All these traits need not be present for a student to be identified as at risk.

- academic difficulties
- lack of structure
- inattentiveness
- distractibility
- short attention span
- low self-esteem
- health problems
- excessive absenteeism
- dependence
- discipline problem
- narrow range of interest
- lack of social skills
- inability to face pressure
- fear of failure (feels threatened by learning)
- lack of motivation

Certain characteristics are often present with low achievers, but not are absolute.

Sartain (1989) stated that these problems may have their roots in infancy and usually develop in home school community situations that occur long before the unfortunate behaviors become highly visible in later school years. Among the groups of disadvantageous factors that may, if occurring to an abnormal degree, be related to the individual's at-risk status are the following:

- limited background attainments
- personal development difficulties
- physical deprivation
- disease and illness
- neglect or abuse
- emotional handicaps
- nonscholarly tendencies
- substance addiction
- antisocial tendencies

Many studies list early school failures as characteristic of dropouts. Allen (1956) stated that most dropouts are unsuccessful in school and are retained one or more grades. Therefore, many potential dropouts are below average in academic ability. He reported also that dropouts tend to be low in their abilities in mathematics and reading.

Penty (1956) found a relationship between reading ability and withdrawal from high school:

Three times as many poor readers as good readers dropped out of school, and the likelihood of a poor reader's dropping out was greater when other

factors pressuring a student toward withdrawal were present.

As would be expected, failure in school is closely related to dropping out. Dropouts are often grade repeaters; they fail early, most often in the first, third, and fourth grades, and they show a general decline in scholarship from the elementary to the senior high school. Cook (1954) found that dropouts in the school he studied averaged D grades, while the stay-ins averaged a high C.

According to Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack and Rock (1986) dropouts tend to come from homes with a weaker educational support system. Compared with stayers, dropouts: (1) had fewer study aids present in their homes, (2) had less opportunity for non-school related learning, (3) were less likely to have both natural parents living at home, (4) had mothers with lower level of formal education, (5) had mothers with lower educational expectations for their offspring, (6) had mother who were more likely to be working, and (7) had parents who were less likely to be interested in or to monitor both in-school and out-of-school activities.

Slavin and Madden's (1989) risk factors include low achievement, retention in grades, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status, and attendance at schools with large numbers of poor students. They further stated that because of the strong relationship between the above mentioned factors and the dropout rate, that by the time students are in the 3rd grade it can be predicted with remarkable accuracy which students will drop out of school and which will stay to complete their education.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Purkey (1970) noted that traditionally the child was expected to adjust to the school, rather than the school adjusting to the child. To insure this process, the school is prepared to dispense rewards and punishments, successes and failures, on a massive scale. The child is expected to learn to live in a new environment and to compete for the rewards of obedience and scholarship. Schools stand ready with grades and grade-levels, report cards and honor rolls, continuous evaluation and fierce competition, detention centers and even expulsion, plus a host of other techniques to mold the child to meet the school's expectations.

Purkey and Novack (1984) stated that the school environment was where the student's positive or negative attitudes toward learning evolved. Students receive constant signals that tell them how much the people who design, build, operate, and maintain schools care about them and their learning.

Research conducted by Hamby (1989) concluded that when we seek out conditions that enhance our survival at the biological and psychological levels, we call this a positive attitude. When we avoid threatening conditions, we display a negative attitude. The totality of beliefs and attitudes we hold about ourselves and our place in the scheme of things is what we call an identity.

This view is important in understanding why so many young people drop out of school. Many of them perceive school as a

threatening place and want to escape the aversiveness they feel there. This view also gives us guidance in keeping students in school.

Hamby cited two conditions necessary in keeping students in school. First, we must make school a pleasant, relevant place that students find enhancing. Second, we must make school a place with which all students can identify and to which they can become committed. We can accomplish these tasks in two ways: make students competent learners, and confirm them as worthy individuals by treating them with respect and acceptance. The keys are meaningful instruction provided by competent teachers and a school environment characterized by care and concern.

Purkey and Novack (1984) suggest that everyone and everything in schools should invite the realization human potential. This involves the people (teachers, bus drivers, assistants, cafeteria staff, secretaries, librarians, nurses, counselors, custodians, administrators, etc.), the places (classrooms, offices, hallways, commons, restrooms, playing fields, gymnasiums, libraries), the policies (rules, codes, procedures), and the programs (curricular or extra curricular). Everybody and everything can and should invite students to develop intellectually, socially, psychologically, and physically. This process is called invitational education.

Invitational education is a perceptually based, self-concept approach to the educative process and professional functioning that centers on four basic principles: (1) people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly; (2) teaching

should be cooperative activity; (3) people possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development; and (4) this potential can best be realized by places, policies, and programs that are specifically designed to invite development, and by people who are personally and professionally inviting to themselves and others.

According to Ogden and Germinario (1988) it is not unusual for students and their parents to identify classrooms where a positive feeling tone exists. These feelings usually are observed in classrooms where a warm, supportive environment is in effect. Further, these classrooms tend to promote an atmosphere where children feel comfortable to raise their hands, to take an active part in the learning process, to take fore chances, and where tolerance is exhibited for student mistakes.

Students are likely to work better and achieve at higher levels in an atmosphere that assumes that they can and will succeed in the tasks established by the teacher. There is a clear relationship between achievement gains in average and below average ability level students and number of successful responses they give in a classroom. Thus, teachers must plan situations and events that are designed specifically to provide opportunities for these students to get right answers and thus earn the praise and reinforcement associated with high achievement.

Cuban (1989) concluded that over the last century, educators and public officials have most often defined the problem of low achievement by at-risk children the following two ways:

- Students who perform poorly in school are responsible for their performance; that is, they lack ability, character, or motivation.
- Families from certain cultural backgrounds fail to prepare their children for school and provide little support for them in school; they are poor, lack education and don't teach their children what is proper and improper in the dominant culture.

Two alternative views of the problem have been proposed, though much less frequently:

- Children often fail because the culture of the school ignores or degrades their family and community backgrounds. Middle-class teachers, reflecting the school's values, single out for criticism differences in children's behavior and values; they crush the self-esteem of students and neglect the strengths that these students bring to school.
- The structure of the school is not flexible enough to accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of a heterogeneous student body. Programs are seldom adapted to children's individual differences. Instead, schools seek uniformity, and departures from the norm in achievement and behavior are defined as problems. Social, racial, and ethnic discrimination are embedded in the routine practices of schools and districts.

Smey-Richman (1989) noted that most likely the nature and degree of teacher-expectation effects observed in a particular classroom vary with the teacher's personal characteristics and beliefs about teaching and learning. Three major characteristics affect the expectations of a teacher for student learning: (1) the

teacher's role definition (i.e., degree to which the teacher is willing to assume personal responsibility for student learning), (2) rigidity versus flexibility of teacher expectations, and (3) the degree to which expectations about individual students are salient and taken into account in planning and delivering instruction (versus held lightly and adjusted in response to current student behavior). Other potential candidates include a teacher's general level of intelligence, cognitive complexity, locus of control, sense of efficacy, causal attribution patterns, cognitive style, tolerance for ambiguity, and various coping and defense mechanisms.

Purkey and Novack (1984) stated that the subtle, but pervasive presence of inviting and disinviting messages in and around schools has been documented by the findings of classroom interaction studies. Teachers tend to exhibit more positive non-verbal behavior (smiles, nods, winks) to students considered bright than to those considered dull. Teachers also teach more to, spend more time with and request more from students they consider to be able. Furthermore, "least-efficient" learners are more likely to be ignored, to receive less attention, and to be given fewer opportunities to respond. Based on the image of their ability and potential in the minds of teachers, certain students receive a disproportionate number of inviting messages while others are disinvited, either intentionally or unintentionally.

The influence of teacher attitudes on student achievement continues to receive considerable attention. Some studies have failed to provide evidence that teacher expectancy influences

student performance, but most research findings support the view that students are more than likely to perform as their teachers think they will. As Brophy and Good (1974) concluded from their extensive research: "When teachers had higher expectations for students, they actually produced higher achievement in those students than in students for whom they had lower expectations.

Ogden and Germinario (1988) documented that most teachers tend to call on those students that can be consistently depended upon to provide a correct answer. This is primarily done so that: (1) a student not expected to know the answer does not get embarrassed, (2) to ensure that the students in the class hear a correct and thoughtful reply, and (3) to provide a certain degree of teacher reward associated with high quality student performances. This phenomenon produces an interesting paradox. Students will soon realize that they are less likely to be called on; consequently, because they are not actually engaged in classroom interaction they become less able. Knowing that they probably will not be called upon, many students are likely to seek attention and success through dysfunctional means or unresponsively drift through school.

Taking time to listen to a student who wishes to contribute to the class or offer a personal experience clearly establishes a climate where a student feels he/she is important. A variety of studies link this notion of personal regard to a student's willingness to engage in learning and, thus increase the likelihood of achievement.

Lehr and Harris' (1988) research supports the belief that some

teachers do communicate inappropriate expectations toward students they believe to be less capable. Students categorized by teachers as at-risk are treated differently from high achievers. For example, sometimes these students are systematically:

- seated farther away from the teacher
- given less direct instruction
- offered fewer opportunities to learn new material
- asked to do less work
- called on less often
- given less wait time
- questioned primarily at the knowledge / comprehension levels
- not prompted when they do not know the answer to a question
- given less praise
- rewarded for inappropriate behavior
- criticized more frequently
- given less feedback
- interrupted more often
- given less eye contact and other nonverbal communication of attention and responsiveness

Teachers' expectations about students' ability or inability to learn may sometimes become self-fulfilling prophecies. Not all of the above behaviors need to be exhibited to bring about self-fulfilling prophecies, however. If, for example, low-achieving students are assigned considerably less content than they can handle, that factor alone will reduce their learning.

Smey-Richman (1989) found that teachers' expectations of student performance may alter the ways that teachers treat students; this differential treatment may have a negative affect on the behavior and learning of students for whom teachers hold low expectations.

An important outcome of research on teacher expectations has been the identification of different ways in which teachers may treat high and low-achieving students. The most common differential behaviors include:

- seating lows farther from the teacher or in a group
- criticizing lows more often for failure
- praising lows less frequently for success
- rewarding lows for incorrect answers
- providing lows with less feedback about their responses
- waiting less time for lows to answer questions
- not staying with lows in failure situations, i.e., not providing clues, asking follow-up questions
- calling on lows less often to respond to questions
- generally paying less attention to lows or interacting with them less frequently
- demanding less work and effort from lows

Taken together, the teacher behaviors listed above indicate that students for whom teachers hold low expectations have fewer opportunities to interact and participate in classroom activities. The cumulative effect of such differential treatment was studied over a three-year period by Rist who found that, as low expectation

students progressed through school, they made fewer efforts to get the teacher's attention and they gradually withdrew psychologically. In addition, low-expectation students became more hostile and critical of others in their own group, although they did not direct their hostility toward the high expectation students.

Smey-Richman (1989) stated that teachers' potential for expectation effects depended in part on their need for control (more specifically, their fear of loss of control) when interacting with students. He cites research indicating that teachers perceive themselves as more able to predict and control student behavior when dealing with high rather than low-expectation students, when the teacher rather than the student initiates the interaction. To the extent that teachers fear loss of control, they will be anxious to avoid public interaction with low-expectation students. As a result, these teachers may call on low-expectations students less often, ignore or refuse student attempts to initiate questions or comments, and in general, treat students with less warmth and encouragement. They may even withhold praise for the accomplishments of low-expectations and criticize them more for failure in order to reduce the frequency of interaction with such students.

Levin (1987) reported that our progress toward improving the education of disadvantaged youths was limited by the way in which we think about and address the problem. We know that they begin school with a learning gap in areas that schools and mainstream economic and social institutions value. But remedial interventions are not

adequate unless they substantially narrow that gap by bringing the disadvantaged up to the same range of academic performance as their peers.

We assume that disadvantaged students will not be able to maintain a normal instructional pace, that merely providing remedial services will close the learning gap, and that no timetable is required placing youngsters in a less demanding instructional setting with a time limit may appear rational and even compassionate, but we must consider the consequences.

First the current intervention model reduces learning expectations of both the children and their educator. By labeling both children and their educators. By labeling both children and teachers as inferior, the model contributes to weak social support for the activity, and low social status and negative self-images for the persons engaged in remediation. The combination of low social status and low expectations treats such students and their educators as educational discards, marginal to mainstream education. These are the unhealthy conditions under which to expect significant educational progress. In contrast, an effective approach would create learning activities characterized by high expectations and a learning environment characterized by high status for the participants.

Second, the usual treatment of educationally disadvantaged students is not designed to bring them up to grade level. No timetables exist for doing so, and few incentives or even provisions are available to move students from remedial instruction to the

mainstream. In fact, since we expect students in remedial situations to progress at a slower than "normal" pace, they fulfill our expectations by falling further and further behind their counterparts. The result is that once we relegate a disadvantaged student to remedial or compensatory interventions, that student will be expected to learn at a slower rate, and the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students will grow.

A successful program would set a deadline for closing the achievement gap so that ultimately educationally disadvantaged children will be able to benefit from mainstream education.

Third, by deliberately slowing the pace of instruction to a crawl, the existing intervention model emphasizes endless repetition of material through drill-and-practice. The result is that the school experience of disadvantaged youth lacks vitality, and their slow rate of progress reinforces our low expectations. The programs omit interesting applications and assignments in favor of drudgery. The premise is that students must learn fundamentals before they can be offered anything more challenging. As a result, both language and mathematics skills are virtually without substance, emphasizing mechanics over content. Such a joyless educational experience diminishes the possibility that the child will view school positively. An effective curriculum for disadvantaged children would not only be faster paced but would actively engage their interests and motivate them to learn.

Seeley (1987) asserted that public schools as they operate for many children today -- especially poor children -- help produce

incompetence, irresponsibility, and dependence. Public schools all too often help perpetuate poverty rather than prevent it.

The virus of passivity infects a large percentage of our classrooms and schools. It is a virus bred of a system that has redefined education as something provided rather than worked for, "delivered", rather than engaged in, and "targeted" at students, rather than based on their responsible and active participation. This nonengagement of students in their education comes in part from the way we have conceived and structured our public school systems.

The dominant structure of public education is the delegation or service delivery model. The public delegates the job of education our children to a government agency called a public school system, which is expected to "deliver educational services". The services are expected to produce the the desired education; if results are unsatisfactory, the solution is to increase or improve services.

By defining education as a service, the student becomes the "recipient" or "target" of the services, not responsible responsible he has to be for successful learning and effective character development. The role of parents also becomes redefined in ways that diminish their direct responsibility for the education of their children.

The fact that these redefinitions take place in the context of a bureaucratic government agency compounds the problem. For the system reinforces teachers in thinking they have done their job by "delivering" the bureaucratically defined service, whether or not students learn. Students feel they have fulfilled their

responsibilities if they sat in class and allowed the services to be delivered.

Seeley summarized that poor children are more likely to be in schools with a high passivity quotient, and the resulting educational experience is more likely to keep them passive, unsuccessful learners. Even within a given class, poor children are more likely to be left in a passive role -- with less expected of them not only in terms of achievement, but in terms of the kind of active participation that leads to achievement.

Complaints about poor results will likely prompt the system to increase services rather than to change the relationship between the services and the students. When these don't work, the response is either that not enough services were provided, or that the students are beyond help. At that point, the virus of passivity is compounded with the infection or rejection and alienation to create a galloping case of despair, dependence, and future poverty.

SELF-CONCEPT AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

Sartain (1989) asks why some children don't try harder, but students, even those having adequate aptitudes, may put inadequate effort into their schoolwork because of the related factors of inadequate self-concepts, low aspirations, low motivation, inadequate conative (drive) development, and negative values.

Canfield and Wells (1976) assert that by the time a child reaches school age his self-concept is quite well formed and his reactions to learning, to school failure and success, and to the physical, social, and emotional climate of the classroom will be determined by the beliefs and attitudes he has about himself. There is considerable evidence to support this view. Perhaps the most dramatic is that Wattenberg and Clifford, who studied kindergarten youngsters in an attempt to see if self-concept was predictive of reading success two and a half years later. It was. In fact, it was a better predictor than IQ. Children with low (poor) self-concepts did not learn to read or did not read as well as children with high (good) self-concepts.

Other studies affirm the position that self-concept is related to achievement in school; they also indicate that the relationship is particularly strong in boys, that it begins to make itself evident as early as the first grade, and that learning difficulties experienced in early school years persist.

Purkey/Novak (1984) believe that that for students to learn in school, they require sufficient confidence in themselves and their abilities to make some effort to succeed. Self-regard and efforts to control one's destiny correlate highly. The more self-esteem a person has, the greater, as a rule, is his desire, and his ability, to control himself. Without self-confidence, students easily succumb to apathy, dependence, and loss of self control. The classroom result is that some students will expect the worst in every situation and will be constantly afraid of doing the wrong thing or saying the wrong word. Too often, the real problem of negative self-esteem is hidden beneath such labels as unmotivated, undisciplined, or uninterested.

Pogrow (1988) suggests that the best way to develop the self-confidence of students is through "controlled floundering". Modern pedagogy seems to have shifted toward a belief that feeling good about oneself is the best way to enhance the learning of underachievers. In essence, we treat kids as morons with fragile psyches when we feed them simple, dull material over and over again. The irony is that the techniques that have evolved to protect the students' self-concept prevents one from forming.

In reality, self-confidence evolves from success at a complex task that is viewed as valuable by the students and their peers. While such floundering generates initial frustration, after the first few successes they realize that once they put their minds to a problem, they can figure out a good solution. The sense of accomplishment that comes from routinely mastering what at first

seemed incomprehensible is a far more powerful learning experience than a teacher's telling them they are smart and giving them simple tasks.

Studies repeatedly have shown that students who underachieve in comparison with others in their classes, have lower self-concepts and lower feelings of self-worth. In a seven-year study, Coopersmith found three conditions that related to development of positive self-esteem. Briefly, they are (1) nearly total acceptance of the child by its parents-- expression of much warmth and love and acceptance of child behavior, making the child feel of personal importance; (2) clearly defined and enforced and rewarded, with any necessary punishment perceived as justified; and (3) respect and latitude for individual action-- sharing of views and opinions along with noncoercive treatment of behavior that is within the limits of clearly established rules.

In 1964 Brookover, Thomas and Patterson conducted a study which had three purposes: (1) to determine whether the student's concept of his ability in school is significantly and positively related to academic performance; (2) to see if the self concept is differentiated into specific self concepts which correspond to specific subject-matter areas; and (3) to see if the self concept is significantly and positively correlated with the student's perception of how significant others view his ability.

The method employed was to study the self reports of over 1,000 seventh-grade, white students in an urban school system. Each child was given the Self Concept of Ability Scale, to determine his

concept of his own ability, both in general and particular subjects.

After the I.Q. was factored out, the students' reported concepts of their own abilities and their grade-point averages were found to be significantly and positively correlated. Brookover and his associates concluded that the relationship is substantial even when measured I.Q. is controlled. Moreover, there are specific self concepts of ability which differ from the self concept of ability which are related to specific academic areas and which differ from the self concept of general ability. Finally, the self concept is significantly and positively correlated with the perceived evaluations of the student by other significant people. In summarizing their 1964 research, Brookover, Patterson, and Thomas (1965) concluded that self concept of academic ability was associated with academic achievement at each grade level.

Sartain's (1989) research revealed that teachers also affected children's self-perceptions. Students who feel they are liked and respected by their teachers have higher self-concepts, while those who believe they are disliked by their teachers are more dissatisfied with themselves.

Several researchers have observed that the attainment of positive student self-concepts is related to supportive teacher behaviors such as calm, accepting interaction, use of humor, and a low degree of negative evaluation and grim domination. Harsh, unsympathetic criticism by either teachers or parents regularly is found to be related to impairment of ego function, lowering the child's self-esteem.

Low self-esteem in learning is debilitating because "motivation to pursue a goal is determined by the expectancy one has of attaining that goal and the value one places on attaining it". And it is easy to rationalize that an educational goal is not of great value if one feels one cannot attain it.

Purkey (1970) found that academic success or failure appears to be as deeply rooted in concepts of the self as it is in measured mental ability, if not deeper. The assumption that human ability is the most important factor in achievement is questionable, and that the student's attitudes limit the level of his achievement in school. Over-all, the research evidence clearly shows a persistent and significant relationship between the self concept and academic achievement.

PARENTAL INFLUENCES AND HOME ENVIRONMENT

Purkey (1970) suggests that there is strong evidence to support the idea that successful students may generally be characterized as standing high in their own self-regard and as possessing confidence in their abilities to cope successfully with life. Because of this persistent relationship between the self and scholastic success, it is helpful to explore the characteristics of the enhancing home environment.

According to Sattes (1989) all parents communicate important values about school and learning, and these attitudes toward learning help determine and shape children's attitudes. Many times attitudes of parents are rooted in their own experiences with school. These attitudes are not likely to change with intervention, but it is encouraging to note that attitudes and behaviors can be changed.

Lehr and Harris (1988) found that parents can play a major role in helping the underachieving student. Research indicates that during the formative years-- until the end of high school-- parents nominally control 87 percent of a student's waking time. The attitude that parents convey to their children about the importance of learning is a major variable in student success. Students who believe in the value of hard work and responsibility and who attach

importance to education are less likely to become school dropouts.

Sartain (1989) determined that among family factors affecting children's education and success are child care, family attitudes and values, parental role-modeling and guidance, family tensions, and family economics. Downing and Leong have quoted an English researcher in support of this contention:

Factors in the home environment are overwhelmingly more important than those of the neighborhood or the school. Of these home influences, factors of maternal care and of parental attitude to education, to school, and to books, are of greater significance than social class and occupational level.

Lehr and Harris (1988) concluded that because the curriculum of the home predicted learning twice as well as socioeconomic status of family, the importance of parent education was paramount in succeeding with low-achieving students. Effective schools appreciate the absolute necessity of getting parents involved in the educational program. This is often not an easy task. In some cases, parents of low achievers distrust the school system, based on their individual anxieties caused by previous negative experiences.

If fewer parents are intimidated or excluded from the work of the school, children at risk will have added resources and school will have more allies.

Judging by the available research (Brookover, 1965; Thomas, 1966; and Coopersmith, 1967) as well as by everyday experience, there is little room for doubt that parents play an extremely vital role in the development of self-regard in their children. For example, in their attempts to improve scholastic achievement by enhancing students' self concept, Brookover attempted three methods of treating 49 low-achieving ninth-grade students over a period of nine months: (1) to enhance the academic expectations and the evaluations his parents had of the student's ability; (2) to introduce the student to an "expert" who directly communicated enhancing information about his ability; and (3) to create a "significant other" in the form of a counselor whose high academic expectations and evaluations of the student might be internalized by him. Of the three approaches, only the first produced the desired results. When the perceptions of the parents were modified, the students changed their self-perception positively and also improved their grades, although the improvement was not maintained when the treatment was discontinued. It can be concluded from this study the student's self-regard is much influenced by his parents' level of regard for him and his abilities.

Sartain (1989) stated that young children tend to achieve at higher levels when they are aware of their parents' interest, and they tend to inculcate the values their parents display. When

parents show that their attitudes toward schools are negative, that they have little interest in their children's schoolwork or that they do not place special value on good work habits, the effect on school achievement almost always is negative. Henderson (1988) reinforced Sartain. If school improvement efforts are judged successful when they raise student achievement, the research strongly suggests that involving parents can make a critical difference.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) concluded that parental attendance at school events designed for parents was associated with higher grades. Children whose parents attended Open School Night or College Night, for example, earned higher grades compared to children whose parents did not attend. This is not necessarily a reflection of social class: Regardless of the level of parental education, parents who attended school functions had children who received slightly higher grades in high school. Similarly, there was slight positive correlation between parental attendance at their children's activities (such as dramatic performances or athletic events) and school achievement, even when controlled for social class and ethnic membership.

The studies show that programs designed with strong components of parent involvement produce students who perform better than those who have taken part in otherwise identical programs with less parent involvement. Students in schools where faculty maintain frequent contact with their communities outperform those in other schools. Children whose parents are in touch with the school score

higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Parents who help their children learn at home nurture (in themselves and in their children) attitudes that are crucial to achievement. Children who are failing in school improve often dramatically when parents are called in to help.

The effects persist well beyond the short term. For example, low-income and minority graduates of preschool programs with high levels of parent involvement are still outperforming their peers when they reach senior high school. Some of the major benefits of parent involvement include higher grades and test scores, better long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful programs, and effective schools.

Not only do individual children and their families function more effectively, but there is an aggregate effect on the performance of students and teachers when schools collaborate with parents. The research also tells us that parent involvement works better when parents are given a variety of roles to play. The particular forms of parent involvement do not seem to be as important as the fact that the involvement is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) cited that when parents were asked to give possible explanations, some said their attendance at school events actively demonstrated the values they expressed verbally to their children. Taking the time to spend an evening at school showed the sincerity of their emphasis on education. Others remarked that they were able to communicate better with their

children after having observed some aspects of the world in which they spend so much of their day. If their children gave distorted reports of events at school, the parents were better able to support teachers after having gone to the school and judging the situation for themselves.

Counseling toward particular courses and classes can shape, in different ways, the entire academic history of students who enter high school with similar social and academic backgrounds. Perhaps schools are more careful in counseling children of parents who demonstrate greater interest in school by attending more school events. Similarly, such parents may be quicker to note and act upon what they perceive as mistakes in assigning their children to class and courses, and the school personnel may be more likely to respond to requests for changes from such parents.

Sartain (1989) tabulated the frequency of parents' visits to the school as part of the evidence of their interest, and concluded that children whose parents were most interested had the highest reading achievement. He also found that 70 percent of children of interested parents were rated as hard workers, while only 33 percent of disinterested parents' children were so rated. In a related study, a team found that between ages 11 and 15 the reading levels of children having interested parents continued to improve, child achievement of children of disinterested parents tended to deteriorate.

Sartain (1989) also revealed that when parents were encouraged to take children just completing first grade to the library weekly

during the summer, the pupils' reading achievement at the beginning of second grade was far superior to that of those who had not been taken to the library. And studies with children aged 6 to 13 revealed that paired reading, parent and child reading together regularly, resulted in 3 to 5 times the normal growth in reading achievement.

Parents who read frequently and have many good books and magazines in the home demonstrate values that tend to be assimilated by their children. The home reading environment seems to have more effect on a child's reading attitudes than socioeconomic status.

Sattes (1989) summarized her review of research by stating that although parent involvement in almost any form seems to improve student achievement, research indicates that such achievement is greater with high levels of involvement and with involvement that is meaningful. When parents of low-performing children are trained as tutors, their children make significant gains in the subjects e.g., reading and mathematics, that are tutored in.

Some researchers report achievement gains without specific training for parents. It appears that parents do not have to be involved directly in the teaching role. Gains have been reported when parents function in a support role to encourage learning.

A logical conclusion from various studies is that when parents have access to information they need (e.g., a list of spelling words) and know what they can do to help (e.g., read to their children, or provide a quiet time at home for study), they will respond. Parents want their children to do well in school; however,

they often don't know what they can do to help.

Parents don't need to be involved in a clearly defined role for their participation to make a difference. In some studies, achievement gains occur when parents are simply informed about their child's progress. Parental encouragement and reinforcement of the child's school accomplishments can affect school performance significantly.

For parent involvement to have the greatest impact on student achievement, it must be meaningful. In general, a program becomes meaningful to parents when they can see a direct benefit to their children, a commitment from teachers and administrators that parents are important, and evidence that what they, as parents, are doing makes a difference.

Attendance and achievement are highly correlated, so attacking the attendance problem is one way of addressing higher achievement. As parents become more involved with the school, they feel responsible for getting their children to school, and they take extra steps to that end. In one study, parents were taught to increase the academic expectations they held for their children; as a result, students' self-perceptions improved, as did their grades.

Sattes (1989) notes that a change occurs in the home environment which supports and maintains school achievement. Parent behaviors change as a result of involvement with their children's learning experiences.

Attitudes also change when parents become involved with schools. They become more supportive, and their values and

attitudes serve to shape a child's school performance.

Studies by Henderson (1988) show that building a strong learning environment at home - including holding high expectations of success and encouraging positive attitudes toward education - powerfully affects student achievement. Exceptionally gifted students, for example, nearly always have parents who are enthusiastically involved in every aspect of their development, from first toy piano to Carnegie Hall debut. This finding holds true across all social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.

When parents show an interest in their children's education and maintain high expectations for their performance, they are promoting attitudes that are critical to achievement - attitudes that can be formed independently of social class or other external circumstances. Schools can help by encouraging parents to work with their children and by providing helpful information and skills. The studies show clearly that parent involvement - whether bases at home or at school and whether begun before or after a child starts school - has significant, long-lasting effects. In fact, these effects vary directly with the duration and intensity of the parent involvement: the more, the better.

Nelson (1988) concluded that parents need to have the opportunity to work with teachers as partners rather than in the provider - client relationship which often exists. This is a dangerous perspective to have because it builds a "delivery system" mentality. In this type of system, disappointment and hostility grow as a result of misunderstandings about what the system can and

cannot do. The goals, methods, and responsibilities of the individuals involved are often unclear, undefined and unexplained. A partnership is more positive and supportive in its view. In a partnership, however, mutual respect is possible and each partner is responsible for the attainment of goals. The strengths of each partner compensate for the weaknesses of the other in particular situations.

CHARACTERISTICS / COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

No formulas exist as yet to explain how to put together the right combination of people, things, and ideas to create a particular setting that succeeds with at-risk students. All that is currently available is general advice: build commitment among those involved in school-based change, help practitioners strengthen their skills in working together, and remember that change should be viewed as a process rather than a product.

Natriello, Pallas, and McDill (1986) lists characteristics of successful dropout-prevention programs that include small class, individualized approaches, small student-teacher ratios, and more counseling resources, all of which tend to make the school organization more responsive to the concerns and problems of students.

Several school practices that appear to affect the responsiveness of school personnel to student needs. First, smaller schools and programs appear to permit greater responsiveness to students. Second, greater individualization of curricular and instructional strategies that involve the tailoring of course content and the method and pace of instruction to individual students results in more responsive learning conditions for all students. Third, when school programs are consistent with the cultural and community conditions under which students live, educators are able to be more responsive to individual students.

Cuban (1989) identified common markers which characterize those successful schools, programs, and classrooms that practitioners have created for at-risk students. Successful in this context means schools and classrooms where teachers motivate students to complete school, that increase students' desire to learn, and that build self-esteem and enhance academic performance. Certain features of such schools and classrooms have appeared repeatedly in the research literature, and they coincide with practitioners' wisdom about what works with at-risk students.

1. Size. Successful programs serve as few as 50 students and seldom more than a few hundred. All adults and students know one another at some level. In secondary schools these successful programs might be schools-within-a-school or housed apart from the main building. The face-to-face contact cultivates enduring, rather than passing, relationships between old and young. Small programs are also more likely to involve students in program activities, and smaller class size permits more personalized instruction.

2. Staff. Teachers volunteer for these programs and classes and make a commitment to educating at-risk students. Teachers develop camaraderie when they share a commitment, personal and cultural knowledge about students, and willingness to learn from failure.

3. Program flexibility. Because these schools and programs are small and are committed to rescuing students from what appears to be inevitable failure, they share a willingness to try different approaches. Ability grouping is uncommon; few, if any, distinctions are made among students; tests are used only to match students with

appropriate materials. Passing and failing are personal benchmarks along a clearly marked road of achievable goals, not public displays in which some move ahead and others stay behind.

Time and scheduling are handled differently in these schools. Secondary teachers frequently spend more time each day with students, and the same teacher may work with a group of students for two or even three years.

Teaching is flexible, as well. Working with small groups of students and individuals is common; team teaching is widespread. The same high school teacher may teach three subjects and serve as advisor for a handful of students. In-school activity is frequently mixed with paid employment outside the school building. Finally, many of these programs link students with a wide array of social services through teachers, advisors, or special staff members. Hence, teaching is an uncommon mix of tasks.

4. Classroom communities. In these successful schools, the school, program, or classroom becomes a kind of extended family, and achievement and caring for one another are both important. A sense of belonging to a group - in effect, a different culture - is created as a means of increasing self-esteem and achievement. Of course, the community model exists in some special programs in regular schools, in small elementary schools, and in high school athletics, clubs, bands, drill teams, and the like. but this model tends to be rare in large schools and is further limited by the structure of the school schedule, by ability grouping, and by a host of other factors.

These features of schools, programs, and classrooms that have succeeded with at-risk children add up to teachers and administrators working together to make what is into what ought to be. They must change the size, structure, staffing, and relationships between students and adults. They must alter - dramatically and fundamentally - what occurs routinely between teachers and students.

Jones (1988) believed that fundamental support services and educational goals for students at-risk academically should be defined on the basis of their needs. And the goals of schooling for students at-risk should be threefold: (1) to reconnect them to the opportunities and responsibilities in America from which they have become isolated; (2) to provide the skills and knowledge they need to acquire, use, and produce information meaningfully and critically, as well as to solve real problems related to their lives and society's goals; and (3) to teach them to become independent learners as well as learners in collaborative contexts.

Defining the goals of schooling for students at-risk in terms of reconnecting and educating as separate but related functions has important implications for policies and practices relating to curriculum and instruction. The following provisions are outstanding:

- regarding the curriculum: more meaningful learning in basic skills and the content areas, focusing on higher-order objectives, critical and creative thinking, learning how to learn, problem solving, and conceptual change; greater access to well-written

literature, textbooks, and instructional materials; new guidelines and curricula for areas such as parent effectiveness training for teenage parents, misconceptions in mathematics and science, comprehension monitoring, collaborative learning and problem solving, decision making, intergroup relations and governance, health care, developing a cognitive approaches to learning a second language.

- regarding instruction: more instructional strategies formulated to involve students in the learning process, to link new information to prior knowledge, to represent and organize new information in oral language and in prose, to transfer and apply what is learned to new areas, and to use what is learned to solve problems.

- regarding assessment: new tests for higher-order thinking, for use of specific thinking / learning strategies and organizational patterns, and for potential to learn. Many of the educational problems that exist today, especially for students at risk, are the result of using standardized tests that focus on multiple choice formats and the recall of isolated facts.

- regarding building and classroom organization: more effort to integrate low-achieving students physically within the life of the school among students with differing talents and capabilities, rather than isolating them in tracks, rigid ability groups, and pullout programs. Strategies for doing this might include grouping for different purposes, cooperative learning in heterogeneous classrooms, flexible scheduling, group work involving intensive participation and interaction, peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring,

smaller class sizes, and the use of instructional strategies such as brainstorming and discussion designed to share information.

- regarding support services: better access to more support services to address issues of physical and mental health, poverty, family living, employment, and housing. These support services could be provided by better coordination of available services from the city and state or by inclusion of such services with school campuses. In either case, they should become part of the curriculum and instruction options for students at-risk.

- regarding dropping out: more emphasis on prevention in terms of providing meaningful school experiences and more opportunities for "second chances" within schools. as it stands now, second chance education is often left to interventions in private schools or within the school system in reentry centers and alternative schools, which are somehow disconnected from the heart of schooling. While such measures may be highly functional in the absence of other options, one could conceptualize schools as offering such a variety of services and programs that dropouts and adult illiterates could be educated without being isolated from the mainstream of school life.

Research by Wehlage, Rutter and Turnbaugh (1987) along with subsequent developmental work with practitioners, has produced alternative programs of the school-within-a-school or alternative school type. High schools implementing the model have provided the practical experience of program development as well as research data.

The characteristics of this program can be described under four categories: (1) administration and organization, (2) teacher culture, (3) student culture, and (4) curriculum.

1. Administration and organization. The model requires the size of the program to be relatively small, ideally 25 to 100 students with two to six faculty. Small size is crucial for several reasons. Face-to-face relationships on a continuing basis are necessary if teachers are to communicate the sense of caring that students perceive as absent in the regular high school. All students can be known in a personal way by all of the teachers. Small numbers permit teachers to both personalize and individualize their instructional efforts. From a very practical point of view, teachers more easily can keep track of at-risk students, who sometimes seem to disappear in a large setting.

Small size also facilitates continued fact-to-face communication among faculty for planning and meeting about matters of mutual concern. This permits faculty to create a clear identity for the program, to administer it, and to be responsible for both their program and individual students. Authority and responsibility are not dispersed diffused as they so often are in large high schools.

The model gives teachers the authority to control admissions and dismissals from the program. They have the responsibility of scheduling themselves and the students, as well as creating courses and educational experiences for them. Such autonomy communicates the school system's positive commitment to the teachers and their

programs. Teachers are empowered to deal with difficult students. This autonomy, in turn, promotes teachers' ownership of the program. Teachers feel accountable for the success of both students and the program as a whole.

2. Teacher culture. It is essential that teachers believe at-risk students deserve a renewed opportunity to learn. One way teachers can act on this belief is through the "extended role". This role allows teachers to extend themselves to deal with the "whole child". This means that teachers must be willing to deal with certain problems in the home, community, or peer group to promote student success in school. For example, the teacher may need to confront a substance abuse problem, whether a parent's or a student's, if a student is to learn and develop.

Another important characteristic of the model is that teachers develop a strong sense of joint decision making and cooperation. Teachers in most high schools experience a high degree of isolation physically, psychologically, and professionally during most of their teaching. In contrast, this model seeks to avoid the isolation of the single classroom with its rotating groups of students as well as the isolation of teachers with a group of at-risk students. Thus the model is most effective when there is a single complex of facilities, even if it is only a single large room, within which both teachers and students spent time. Such facilities promote collegiality through frequent face-to-face interactions. They stimulate cooperative relations that make teaching more enjoyable, stimulating, and professionally rewarding.

3. Student culture. The model is also set up to build a student culture with certain characteristics. First, the program is voluntary and students need to apply for admission. Not all candidates are accepted. One criterion of admission is the applicant's willingness to be candid about why he or she is in trouble with the school and to admit that a change in attitude and behavior is necessary for future success.

The program, seen as afresh start, requires commitment from the students. They must commit themselves to a set of rules, work expectations, and standards of behavior. Clear rules about attendance, the quantity and quality of work required, and the consequences for breaking rules need to be spelled out in detail. The model assumes that not everyone can or will make an explicit commitment to such rules. For those who cannot make the initial commitment, admission is denied. Those who persistently fail to keep their commitment are terminated from the program. Dropouts from the dropout-prevention program need to be tolerated. This selectivity factor builds a program image based on standards and excellence. Such standards allow students to take pride in their program and their accomplishments.

Once students accept program requirements and goals, discipline problems can be expected to decline. A positive student culture can result in peer-monitored behavior because students will see that an effective program is in their best interest. Thus, the model creates a "family" atmosphere in which sharing and communication are stressed as ways to help members of the group deal with their

problems. Within this atmosphere are clear rules that all students need to observe if they are to maintain their membership in the program. Students commit to important ethical rules such as not stealing from the group or committing any act of violence against a group member.

4. Curriculum. The model assumes that curriculum and teaching must be substantially different, at least in certain respects, from that which is ordinarily found in high schools. Individualization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of progress, and an active role for students are some of the dominant features. Basic skills must be given attention. However, wide variation in both achievement and ability will exist. The level of skills mastery on the part of students dictates where teachers begin. Most students need remedial work; substantial gains on standard measures can be expected for those who have been disengaged from school work for any length of time. The model allows only a portion of a student's time for remediation. Other important activities implicit in the model include: sex education and parenting instruction; health care and nutrition education; and community social services.

Slavin and Madden (1989) evaluated in-class programs and found that cooperative learning programs were effective in improving the performance of at-risk students. They also reported that "consistently effective classroom programs accommodate instruction to individual needs while maximizing direct instruction and frequently assess student progress through a structural hierarchy of skills".

Early childhood programs, kindergarten, and summer school are examples of the most common add-on programs. The long-term benefits of preschool programs have been shown to be limited in terms of academic gains. There is some indication that there are substantial long-term non-academic benefits.

At-risk students have often been targeted for alternative programs. Because autonomy is usually granted to teachers and supervisors to tailor programs to students' needs, these programs have been offered to students who have failed in more traditional settings.

After analyzing a longitudinal survey Orr, (1987) concluded that sophomores who were at-risk of not completing high school were half as likely to drop out of school if they had participated in an alternative program. Post-high school graduates who participated in alternative programs had a 20 percent lower unemployment rate than dropouts who had not participated in alternative programs. Hahn (1987) cited findings from Foley's study of alternative schools and effective schools. The characteristics included: highly targeted services for a relatively homogeneous school population, strong principals, small school size, teachers who actively participated in counseling students, students, involvement in school governance and classroom activity, opportunities for learning by doing, and clear standards, rules, and regulations. However, it was further concluded that alternative schools do not guarantee success for all at-risk students or dropouts.

Some at-risk students have been attracted to job training and work experience programs. The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provides the major federal funding for training, employment preparation, and job placement. Under this Act, six programs were designed to encourage students to complete high school or return to school by offering them temporary jobs and work experience to prepare them for future employment. Orr (1987) assessed these programs and concluded that it was difficult to recruit and serve dropouts. Many of the basic-skills strategies employed failed to increase the employability and economic status of youth dropouts. Orr suggested that job training programs needed more job readiness and support services as part of the overall programs.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Chapter III describes the procedures followed in this study. It includes a description of the sample, background of the methodology, a summary of the statistical procedures, and the statistical treatment of the data.

Ideally in evaluating a program of this kind, a school by school population of all at-risk students would be identified. Students would be randomly selected for participation in the program. In point of fact, actual selection was a deliberate process involving the principal, teachers, counselors and other support personnel. The search for a suitable "control" generally resulted in two groups that were not matched exactly on all relevant variables.

Population and Subjects

Sixty-one students in the Greensboro City and Guilford County School Systems were included in the experimental group at the beginning of this study. By the end of the school year, 47 students remained. Students leaving the program did so for various reasons, among which were: administrative placement in alternative schools or other programs; moves within the school systems; moves outside of the school systems; dropped out to attend Guilford Technical Community College; inappropriate program for the student; one

student dropped out; one student was a runaway; and there was no available information on one student. The racial make-up of the group included forty-five percent black students and fifty-three percent white students and two percent other. Fifty-eight percent of the students were male. The age range was from eleven years to sixteen years of age.

Criteria for participation in the CIS Program were based on selecting those students who met the highest number of the following at-risk characteristics: (1) One or more retentions; (2) Poor attendance; (3) Poor grades; (4) California Achievement Tests Scores; (5) Behavior problems in school / community; (6) In-school and out-of-school suspension; (7) Prior placement in an alternative school; (8) pregnancy or currently a teenaged parent; (9) Need for social services; (10) Free or reduced-price lunch; (11) Parents non-high school graduates; (12) Court ordered probation; (13) Evidence of drug abuse.

Teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents referred program participants who, after completing application forms, were interviewed by the executive director or one of the CIS staff. Home visits were made for students meeting the criteria for participation. At that time the program objectives were discussed with the parent(s), and written permission was secured for students to participate in the program. CIS was considered as an elective class and students received an elective credit for participation

Like the experimental group, the control group participants were students who displayed at-risk characteristics. Given existing

program criteria which require that students exhibit at least one at-risk characteristics, some members of this group may have qualified for CIS participation. Some of the students who became members of the control group had been invited to participate in the CIS program, but because of scheduling conflicts, lack of parental permission, or lack of interest did not register for the Cities in Schools Program.

The Cities in Schools Program had been in progress for one half of the initial school year prior to the selection of the control group. Administrative permission was granted (1) to identify students who were closely matched to CIS participants, as characterized by at least one at-risk characteristic and (2) to approach parents for permission to use their children in the control group. Written permission from parents of potential control group members was obtained via letters, follow-up phone calls, and some cases home visits.

Procedure

The Greensboro City and Guilford County's CIS Program was selected for evaluation because of the interest of the researcher in the study of at-risk students and the executive director's desire to obtain feedback on strengths and needed improvements of the program.

This evaluation began with a conference between the executive director, a faculty member of the UNC-G Department of Leadership and Higher Education, and the researcher. At this meeting, components of the evaluation were discussed, i.e., parental permission for student participation, gaining access to student records, and establishing a control group of students. The executive director agreed to, and acquired all necessary consent from the school administration and parents.

During the following weeks, the evaluator met with the CIS teachers, the executive director, county agency personnel, and personnel from the Cities in Schools regional office from Atlanta, Georgia.

During the time span from spring 1989 through spring 1990, the researcher made routine visits to the two sites of the Cities in Schools Programs, attended planning sessions with related personnel, attended regional meetings in Atlanta, Georgia and Columbia, South Carolina, and continued to meet with the executive director throughout the course of this study.

Design and Data Analysis

The control group consisted of 60 middle school students who were not participants in the CIS Program. These students were matched as closely as possible on the following variables: (1) Race; (2) Socio-economic status; (3) Number of absences; (4) CAT Scores; (5) GPAs; and (6) In-school and out-of-school suspensions.

The number of matching variables is fairly large given the sample size. Exact matching on all variables was not possible. Thus, some of the comparisons required covariance adjustments.

A wealth of empirical data indicate that the last four variables listed above are positively correlated. This circumstance rendered repeated ANOVAS inappropriate. In addition, with multiple ANOVA's the experimenter-wise error rate would be inflated.

More important, however, is the fact that absences and suspensions were very non-normally distributed. The majority of students had no suspensions, for example. In addition, GPA and CAT scores had very platykurtic distributions. While the F test is known to be fairly robust under violations of normality, the degree of non-normality present in the current data was such that non-parametric analysis were deemed more appropriate.

As indicated earlier, it was not possible to match subjects exactly on all variables. Unfortunately, no non-parametric analogue to the Analysis of Covariance exists. Therefore, within subjects analysis was undertaken. Specifically, changes in the variables of interest for the experimental (CIS) group and the control group were compared over time. The Wilcoxon's Sign-Ranks test was used to assess changes in the dependent variables over the life of the program.

As a general rule, at risk students tend to be absent more and more, tend to get lower and lower grades, and tend to exhibit more and more behavior problems throughout the middle school years. The central hypotheses of this study concerned the effectiveness of the Cities in Schools program in arresting or even reversing this trend.

Hypotheses of the study

This investigation examined the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I: The median GPA of the experimental subjects (CIS) will either remain constant or improve during the course of the Cities in Schools program. Conversely, the median GPA of the control subjects will continue to decline.

Hypothesis II: The median CAT of the experimental subjects (CIS) will either remain constant or improve during the course of the Cities in Schools program. Conversely, the median CAT of the control subjects will continue to decline.

Hypothesis III: The median number of absences of the experimental subjects (CIS) will either remain constant or decline during the course of the Cities in Schools program. Conversely, the median number of absences of the control subjects will continue to increase.

Hypothesis IV: The median number of referrals for discipline of the experimental subjects (CIS) will either remain constant or decline during the course of the Cities in Schools program. Conversely, the median number of referrals for discipline of the control subjects will continue to increase.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter presents the data and analysis of the results of the two year study of the Greensboro City and Guilford County CIS Program.

This study provides an evaluation of an intervention program designed to increase the number of students remaining in school until graduation. It is intended to provide feedback to the administrators of the Cities in Schools program, public school officials, parents, local state and federal agencies with useful information regarding their efforts to prevent students from leaving school before graduation.

This study focused on identifying changes in the following at-risk indicators: GPAs, CAT scores, absences, and referrals for discipline. It should be noted that the referrals for discipline were recorded in terms of the number of times students received in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Data were collected from student records, records kept by CIS personnel, and researcher observation / interviews. However, analysis were only performed on data from student records.

Table I presents basic descriptive information for all students at the beginning of the intervention program, as well as after one and two years of program operation. It should be noted that although differences on some of the variables appear to be large, the extremely skewed distributions for days absent and suspensions

are such that year-to-year differences tend not to be significant. As will be discussed shortly, the Cities in Schools students decreased significantly in grade point averages for the first year, received more in-school suspensions for years one and two, compared to the incoming year, and received significantly more out-of-school suspensions for the first year only.

The control group students were absent significantly more days during year two of program operation, and received more in-school suspensions during both years.

Table I.

YEAR-TO-YEAR STUDENT PROFILES for CIS and Control (CTL) students 1988 - 1990				
		Incoming	1st Year	2nd Year
<u>CAT</u>				
CIS	Means	33	28	31
	Medians	32	23	28
CTL	Means	29	32	31
	Medians	25	31	29
<hr/>				
<u>GPA</u>				
CIS	Means	1.25	1.02	1.16
	Medians	1.25	1.00	1.12
CTL	Means	1.46	1.30	1.26
	Medians	1.50	1.40	1.25
<hr/>				
<u>Days Absent</u>				
CIS	Means	12.6	15.5	16.6
	Medians	8.5	11.0	11.0
CTL	Means	11.6	13.6	17.6
	Medians	8.0	8.0	12.0
<hr/>				
<u>Suspensions (In-School)</u>				
CIS	Means	0.20	2.80	3.60
	Medians	0.00	0.00	0.00
CTL	Means	0.47	1.70	2.90
	Medians	0.00	0.00	0.00
<hr/>				
<u>Suspensions (Out-of-School)</u>				
CIS	Means	0.20	1.29	1.20
	Medians	0.00	0.00	0.00
CTL	Means	1.42	0.65	1.14
	Medians	0.00	0.00	0.00

Tables 2 - 11 give the results of the Sign-Ranks test for the experimental and control subjects. For each of the dependent variables of interest, the tables provide comparisons of incoming characteristics with the same characteristics after the first and second years of the program. Table 12 presents all of the Hypotheses in summary form.

Hypotheses One stated that the median GPA of the experimental subjects (CIS) would either remain constant or improve during the course of the Cities in Schools program. And conversely, that the median GPA of the control subjects would continue to decline. As can be seen from Table 2, this hypothesis was not confirmed. The GPA's of the experimental subjects became significantly worse after one year of treatment, but rebounded and leveled off after the second of treatment. As can be observed from Table 3, there were no significant changes in the GPA's of the control subjects for either year.

Table 2

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Grade Point Averages (CIS)

GPA '88 with GPA '89

Mean Rank	Cases
13.61	19 - Ranks (GPA '89 less than GPA '88)
13.21	7 + Ranks (GPA '89 greater than GPA '88)
	<u>3</u> Ties
	29 Total

$$Z = -2.1080, p < .05$$

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Grade Point Averages (CIS)

GPA '88 with GPA '90

Mean Rank	Cases
12.31	16 - Ranks (GPA '90 less than GPA '88)
14.22	9 + Ranks (GPA '90 greater than GPA '88)
	<u>4</u> Ties
	29 Total

$$Z = -.9283, ns$$

Table 3

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED RANKS TEST
for Grade Point Averages (CONTROL)

GPA '88 with GPA '89

Mean Rank	Cases
20.37	19 - Ranks (GPA '89 less than GPA '88)
16.41	17 + Ranks (GPA '89 greater than GPA '88)
	<u>9</u> Ties
	45 Total
Z = -.8484 ,ns	

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED RANKS TEST
for Grade Point Averages (CONTROL)

GPA '88 with GPA '90

Mean Rank	Cases
20.80	20 - Ranks (GPA '90 less than GPA '88)
16.88	17 + Ranks (GPA '90 greater than GPA '88)
	<u>8</u> Ties
	45 Total
Z = -.9731 ,ns	

Hypothesis Two stated that the median CAT of the experimental subjects (CIS) would either remain constant or improve during the course of the Cities in Schools program. And conversely, that the median CAT of the control subjects would continue to decline. As can be seen from Tables 4 and 5, this hypothesis was not confirmed. There was no significant change in the median CAT scores for either group.

Table 4

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKED TEST
for CAT scores (CIS)

CAT '88 with CAT '89

Mean Rank	Cases
15.70	22 - Ranks (CAT '89 less than CAT '88)
18.25	10 + Ranks (CAT '89 greater than CAT '88)
	<u>2</u> Ties
	34 Total
Z = -1.5240 , ns	

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKED TEST
for CAT scores (CIS)

CAT '88 with CAT '90

Mean Rank	Cases
12.61	14 - Ranks (CAT '90 less than CAT '88)
15.50	13 + Ranks (CAT '90 greater than CAT '88)
	<u>1</u> Tie
	28 Total
Z = -.3003 , ns	

Table 5

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKED TEST
for CAT scores (CONTROL)

CAT '88 with CAT '89

Mean Rank	Cases
21.50	15 - Ranks (CAT '89 less than CAT '88)
15.38	20 + Ranks (CAT '89 greater than CAT '88)
	<u>1</u> Tie
	36 Total

$Z = -.1228$, ns

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKED TEST
for CAT scores (CONTROL)

CAT '88 with CAT '90

Mean Rank	Cases
17.47	19 - Ranks (CAT '90 less than CAT '88)
18.63	16 + Ranks (CAT '90 greater than CAT '88)
	<u>1</u> Tie
	36 Total

$Z = -.2784$, ns

Hypothesis Three stated that the median number of absences of the CIS subjects would either remain constant or decline during the course of the Cities in Schools program. And conversely, the median number of absences of the control subjects would continue to increase. As evidence displays in Tables 6 and 7, this hypothesis was confirmed. Although the CIS subjects' attendance remained the same throughout the course of operation, the attendance of the control subjects became significantly worse during the second year of the study.

Table 6

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Absences "ABS" (CIS)

ABS '88 with ABS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
9.32	11 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
15.89	14 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>1</u> Ties
	26 Total

$Z = -1.6144$, ns

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Absences "ABS" (CIS)

ABS '88 with ABS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
10.39	9 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
10.59	11 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>7</u> Ties
	27 Total

$Z = -.4293$, ns

Table 7

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Absences "ABS" (CONTROL)

ABS '88 with ABS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
17.86	18 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
22.66	22 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>6</u> Ties
	46 Total

$Z = -1.1896$, ns

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Absences "ABS" (CONTROL)

ABS '88 with ABS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
16.79	12 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
23.38	30 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>4</u> Ties
	46 Total

$Z = -3.1259$, $p < .01$

Hypothesis Four stated that the median number of referrals for discipline of the experimental subjects (CIS) would either remain constant or decline during the course of the Cities in Schools program. And conversely, the median number referrals for discipline of the control subjects would continue to increase. As can be seen from Tables 8 - 11, this hypothesis was not confirmed. The median number of referrals for discipline increased for (CIS) subjects during the first and second year of the study. The median number of referrals for discipline increased for the control subjects for the first year only of the study.

Table 8

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for In-School Suspension "ISS" (CIS)

ISS '88 with ISS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
.00	0 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
	8 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>17</u> Ties
	25 Total

$Z = -2.5205$, $p < .05$

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for In-School Suspension "ISS" (CIS)

ISS '88 with ISS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
3.00	1 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
6.82	11 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>13</u> Ties
	25 Total

$Z = -2.8241$, $p < .01$

Table 9

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for In-School Suspension "ISS" (CONTROL)

ISS '88 with ISS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
2.00	1 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
4.33	6 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>12</u> Ties
	19 Total

$Z = -2.0284$, $p < .05$

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for In-School Suspension "ISS" (CONTROL)

ISS '88 with ISS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
4.00	1 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
5.67	9 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>9</u> Ties
	19 Total

$Z = -2.3953$, $p < .05$

Table 10

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Out-of-School Suspension (CIS)

OSS '88 with OSS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
.00	0 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
3.00	5 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>20</u> Ties
	25 Total

$Z = -2.0226$, $p < .05$

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Out-of-School Suspension(CIS)

OSS '88 with OSS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
3.25	2 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
4.92	6 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>17</u> Ties
	25 Total

$Z = -1.6103$, ns

Table 11

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Out-of-School Suspension (CONTROL)

OSS '88 with OSS '89

Mean Rank	Cases
3.17	3 - Ranks (ISS '89 less than ISS '88)
3.83	3 + Ranks (ISS '89 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>13</u> Ties
	19 Total
Z = -.2097 , ns	

WILCOXON MATCHED-PAIRS SIGNED-RANKS TEST
for Out-of-School Suspension (CONTROL)

OSS '88 with OSS '90

Mean Rank	Cases
2.00	3 - Ranks (ISS '90 less than ISS '88)
5.50	4 + Ranks (ISS '90 greater than ISS '88)
	<u>12</u> Ties
	19 Total
Z = -1.3522 , ns	

Table 12

Hypotheses Summary Table

	CIS			Control	
	88-89	89-90		88-89	89-90
GPA	decline	ns	GPA	ns	ns
CAT	ns	ns	CAT	ns	ns
ABS	ns	ns	ABS	ns	increase
ISS	increase	increase	ISS	increase	increase
OSS	increase	ns	OSS	ns	ns

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUMMARY

This study focused on whether or not the Greensboro City and Guilford County CIS Program had a positive affect on the characteristics of students that are mostly likely to drop out of school.

What schools can do to retain "at-risk" students is a persistent problem, but a greater challenge for educators is how to provide educational experiences positive enough to change the lives of these youths. From this perspective, the critical issue facing educators is that of developing a concept of schooling that will be attractive enough to hold these students, and effective enough to promote their learning and development.

The Greensboro City and Guilford County Cities in Schools Program is an effort to retain "at-risk" students at Lincoln Middle and Northeast Middle schools, while promoting their learning and development.

Primarily it was believed by the researcher, that by decreasing the dropout characteristics of students identified as "at-risk", we would have a greater probability of retaining those students until graduation. Dropout characteristics that were studied in this research paper included: attendance patterns, grade point averages, standardized test performance, and referrals for discipline.

The ultimate criterion against which intervention programs must

be judged, is whether they result in students persisting through to graduation and becoming gainfully employed members of society. The present investigation examined the effects of the Cities in Schools intervention on student characteristics that are known to be predictive of eventual graduation. As such, it can be concluded that even if the program had positive effects on such characteristics, they are too subtle to be detected by traditional academic indices. Also, it is possible that program effects reveal themselves much later.

The fact may be that a primary intervention of working with at-risk middle school students for a 50 minute period per day, is simply not intensive enough to cause immediate and detectable changes in their dropout characteristics. Attaining at-risk status is not usually an overnight occurrence, but in most cases, it is a matter of evolution. These students have come to know the world in such a way that education and graduation are not high on their list of lifetime priorities.

The project data generally supported one of the four hypotheses of the study. There was confirmation of the hypothesis that students in the CIS group would maintain their rate of attendance or make significant improvement as compared to the control subjects. There was evidence to support the notion that there had been an arresting affect on this behavior. That is, where the non-CIS participants behaviors continued to decrease in this area, the CIS participants patterns in the same area neither improved nor worsened.

Surprisingly, CIS students actually obtained poorer grade point averages, more in-school suspensions, and more out-of-school suspensions after the first year of the program. While there was significant improvement during the second year, i.e., in both grade point averages and in-school suspensions, the initial decline in those two characteristics remains rather perplexing. This is especially so because with the exception of in-school suspensions, the control group showed no comparable decline in grade point averages or increase in out-of-school suspensions. It is noteworthy however, that the control subjects had a greater number of absences during the second year of the study.

The hypothesis results can be placed into two overlapping categories; academic performance and personal behaviors. It was demonstrated that the current Cities in Schools Program did not lead to an immediate and causal improvement in the areas of grade point averages, standardized test performance, nor reduction in inappropriate behavior. It was demonstrated however, that the Cities in Schools Program does lead to an arresting effect on attendance patterns at the incoming levels of middle school.

Because of the strong relationship between a student's academic performance and school attendance, there is reason to believe that the Cities in Schools program may ultimately be of benefit in reducing the number of at-risk students in our schools. An observer may at first glance of the data, find himself somewhat discouraged about the conclusions of the study, especially since according to Bickle and Bond (1986), and Natriello (1988), poor academic

performance is most often cited as a predictor of who will drop out of school. Upon closer examination of the data, one would find reason to be encouraged. Research demonstrates that improved attendance highly correlates with improved academic performance, and improved academic performance highly correlates with reduced discipline problems.

One would expect to find at-risk middle-school students , to increase the number of days that they are absent and in all probability withdraw from school in a relatively short period of time. As the research data from this study indicates, the control subjects did indeed continue a pattern of increased absences, but the CIS subjects did not. Furthermore, the initial decline in the median grade point averages of the CIS subjects, as compared to their in-coming grade point averages, had become non-significant by the end of the second year of treatment. The CIS subjects also experienced more out-of-school suspensions during the first year of treatment as compared to their in-coming year, but by the end of the second year of treatment these differences had also become non-significant. This is especially encouraging since there were some missing data for the in-coming year of sixth-grade students. Unlike GPA's, CAT scores and attendance records, there were no previous records available for in-school and out-of-school suspensions of sixth-grade students. Therefore, the Cities in Schools program may account for the overall decrease in the rate of suspensions that occurred during the second year of treatment.

The evidence supports the notion that the Cities in Schools

intervention is related to controlling the number of absences of at-risk students. As Finn (1989), noted in his research, improved attendance is crucial to students staying in school. If school is not a place that is attractive enough for students to come, there is no hope of their persisting through graduation. Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) identified two dimensions of commitment in transcripts of interviews with urban school students: commitment to learning and commitment to "the place". Students did not talk much about the latter but it was apparent that school "is where students can come to be with their friends or where they find activities other than educational ones to keep them occupied".

If the Cities in Schools program has indeed been able to arrest poor attendance patterns of at-risk students, then it would seem logical to conclude that the students are less alienated or at least for some other reason attend school more frequently. At this point in the lives of many of these students, the reasons why they attend more frequently are less important than the fact that they do attend more frequently.

This program demonstrates that is possible to begin to affect the disparities between students that are likely to graduate and those who are unlikely to graduate. This program has also met and demonstrated some of the characteristics of programs found to be effective in retaining students until graduation, i.e., maintaining good school/parent relationships, an environment that invites student success, development of positive self-esteem, increased teacher expectations, small class size, and work that is meaningful

to the students.

The literature review and the results of this program come together in such a way as to support the conclusion that a program which emphasizes study skills, increased interaction between the school and home, utilization of community resources, and extended cooperative relationships, may produce improvement, or minimally, maintain the attendance and behavior patterns of students.

Programmatic Recommendations

1. Begin dropout prevention interventions in elementary school. As Slavin and Madden (1989) noted, students who are likely to leave school before graduation can be identified with remarkable accuracy by the time they are in third grade. (For the 1990-91 school year, the Cities in Schools program was moved from Northeast Middle School and placed in a county elementary school).
2. Because of the initial decline in the median grade point averages of these students, it is recommended that the academic/study skills component of the program be intensified. The educational goals of the program may need to be more clearly defined for the students. Even if there is only one targeted subject per grading period, or even per year. The idea is to get students used to experiencing academic success.
3. The most encouraging information to come from this study, was the fact that the CIS students were able to maintain their attendance rate. Although it was not extremely good attendance, it did not grow any worse during the two years of study. It may be beneficial to offer these students additional incentives for attending on a more regular basis. The incentives could be left to anyone participating in the CIS program. Another method that may prove to be effective in increasing the rate of attendance of the CIS students, is to have volunteers go the homes of students whenever they are absent. Often these students are absent, not because they hate coming to school, but because they overslept.
4. Intensify parental support of the program. Continue to

reinforce the fact that parents are partners in this endeavor with the school.

5. Because the behavior of the students did not improve during the course of this study, it is recommended that students have more opportunities to talk privately and in group sessions with counselors. It is also recommended that these students be allowed more opportunities to talk privately and, in group sessions with regular classroom teachers, and especially with the principals and assistant principals. This is done for two reasons. One is that the students will have an opportunity to get to know those in charge of discipline on a more personal level, other than times when they are in trouble. The second is so that behavioral expectations can be made clear and precise to students. Perhaps even a contractual agreement of behavior can be worked out between the disciplinarians and the students. The students will have an opportunity to understand the consequences of inappropriate actions before they are committed. This will place more of the burden of responsibility upon the students and allow them to make informed decisions.

6. Work toward developing more individually specific program goals with input from participating students. This is done so that the students will not develop, nor continue to hold on to a "recipient mentality". Program goals that are developed with the students should indicate to them that education is an interactive process that they engage in, not a service that is delivered. They are the participating stakeholders who have the greatest investment in the outcome.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. There should be a follow-up study to see how many of these students eventually graduate from high school, and to determine if there is a significant difference between the number of CIS graduates and control subject graduates.
2. Future research should look for differences in outcomes between male and female subjects, and white versus minority subjects.
3. Future research should seek to identify relationships between specific program components and specific program outcomes. There should be an effort to match varying methods of involvement to specific goal accomplishment.
4. Future research in the study of at-risk students should focus on those students who would be predicted to drop out, but instead, tend to do well in school.

Summary of the Study

The Cities in Schools Program partially accomplished what it set out to do, as far as the research data illustrate. Students in the program are representative of populations having the greatest number of characteristics of those who are most likely to leave school before graduation. Although the Cities in Schools program was unable to affect positively the dropout characteristics that were studied, it was able in some instances to slow the development of undesirable behaviors.

The approach, that of attention to study skills, an enhanced classroom, improved school/parent relationships, and the development of more positive self-esteem, has been found to be the suggested foundation for program success. The literature supports the probability of achieving the desired results through this type of treatment, although as was mentioned earlier, there are no formulas to explain how to put together the right combination of people, things, and ideas to create a particular setting that succeeds with at-risk students. All that is currently available is general advice: build commitment among those involved in school-based change, help practitioners strengthen their skills in working together, and remember that change should be viewed as a process rather than a product.

This is now the challenge. First, the participating schools must maintain its' accomplishments and seek to improve beyond the basics. The challenge will be to continue a measured vigilance towards keeping standards high, while finding further measurable

academic challenges that will allow the students defined as at-risk to achieve at the same educational levels as their more advantaged peers. As the literature has shown, dropout prevention programs are highly dependent upon the interest and the abilities of the people who work for their success.

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